

Message Text

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70

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 SCCT-01 SAJ-01 AID-05

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /089 W

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R 271622Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4568

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAMA KO 3030

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PINR, UV, ML

SUBJECT: SOVIET INTENTIONS IN MALI

REF: (A) OUAGADOUGOU 2557 (NOTAL), (B) BAMA KO 2973 (NOTAL),
(C) BAMA KO 2622 (NOTAL).

1. OVER THE PAST WEEK CHARGE HAS HAD LONG TALKS WITH THE
FRG CHARGE AND WITH THE COUNSELLOR OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY
ABOUT SOVIET-MALIAN MILITARY COOPERATION. IN THE WESTERN
EMBASSIES' ANALYSIS OF THIS COOPERATION, THERE APPEARS
TO BE A GENERAL CONSENSUS WHOSE MAJOR ELEMENTS ARE AS
FOLLOWS.

2. SOVIET INTENTIONS. THE SOVIET UNION DOES NOT
ASPIRE TO DEVELOP OR TO CONTROL MALIAN ECONOMY AND
SOCIETY. DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE IS SIGNIFICANTLY
REDUCED FROM A MID-60'S HIGH. SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE
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FAITH IN THEIR ABILITY TO ALTER THE FRAMEWORK OF

MALIAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR AND ARE AS CYNICAL AS ANY EX-COLONIAL ABOUT THE MALIANS' CAPACITY TO GOVERN THEMSELVES OR TO PROGRESS ECONOMICALLY.

3. THE SOVIETS DO SEEK TO IMPROVE THEIR TACTICAL CAPABILITY IN THE REGION BY INCREASING INFLUENCE AMONG MALIAN MILITARY, THE MOST VITAL OF MALIAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. TRAINING PROGRAMS PROVIDE CONTINUING ACCESS TO THE MILITARY ELITE. ASSISTANCE TO THE AIR FORCE, INCLUDING IMPROVEMENT OF AIRFIELDS (REF C), GUARANTEES SUPPORT FOR POTENTIAL STOP-OVER OR STAGING NEEDS. A CONTINUAL TRICKLE OF MATERIEL BUYS OFF TOP MALIAN DECISION MAKERS, ALL MILITARY MEN. AS A SIDE BENEFIT, INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE PERMITS THE SOVIETS TO ECLIPSE THE CHINESE, THE ONLY OTHER MAJOR SUPPLIER OF MATERIEL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE MALIAN ARMY.

4. MALIAN INTENTIONS. IN ACCEPTING THIS SOVIET ASSISTANCE, MALI IS NOT PREPARING AGGRESSIVE MEASURES AGAINST ITS NEIGHBORS. WAR IS SOMETHING MALI CANNOT AFFORD. A GOVERNMENT THAT COULD NOT MEET ITS PAYROLL IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY IS NOT IN A POSITION TO LAUNCH MILITARY OPERATIONS. NOR IS THERE EVIDENCE THAT MALI WISHES TO EXPAND ITS ALREADY AMPLE BORDERS. IN THE DISPUTE WITH UPPER VOLTA, MALI WOULD PREFER A DE FACTO SETTLEMENT ARRANGED BETWEEN CHIEFS OF STATE, THUS AVOIDING WHAT ANY BORDER COMMISSION SETTLEMENT WOULD PROBABLY PROVE; THAT THE UPPER VOLTAN TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ARE CORRECT. THIS IS A MATTER OF PRIDE, NOT OF AGGRANDIZEMENT.

5. MALI SEEKS INCREASED MILITARY ASSISTANCE AS A MEANS TO STATUS AND POWER FOR ITS OWN SAKE. IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY OF A MILITARY OLIGARCHY WOULD INCREASE ITS POWER AT ANY AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY. FURTHERMORE, MALIANS ARE PROUD OF THEIR SOMEWHAT DISTANT HISTORY AS A WARRIOR PEOPLE. STRENGTHENING THE ARMY FITS THE NATIONAL CHARACTER AND IS A POPULAR MEASURE. FINALLY, AS A POOR AND

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LANDLOCKED STATE, MALI'S ONLY CLAIM TO STATUS IN THE REGION IS BY MAINTAINING A RESPECTABLE ARMED FORCE.

6. DEFENSE MINISTER'S ROLE. MALIAN INTENTIONS ARE IN PART A FUNCTION OF DEFENSE MINISTER DOUKARA'S DESIRES. CLEVER AND AMBITIOUS, DOUKARA SERVED IN RECENT YEARS AS CZAR OF DROUGHT RELIEF, AND BECAME, NEXT TO THE PRESIDENT, THE RULING

MILITARY COMMITTEE'S MOST POWERFUL PERSONALITY. BUT THE DROUGHT IS OVER AND THE CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION IS ENCROACHING ON DOUKARA'S OLD DOMAIN (REF B). DOUKARA HAS ALSO BEEN UNDER A CLOUD AS A RESULT OF A COUP PLOT GENERATED WITH ARMY RANKS LAST APRIL. HIS WAY BACK TO ESTEEM AMONG HIS FELLOWS AND REAL POWER IN THE NATION IS TO PROVE THAT HIS CONTACTS CAN PROVIDE GOODS WHICH THE MILITARY COMMITTEE THINKS IT NEEDS.

7. DOUKARA IS COUNTING ON MOSCOW TO BUTTRESS HIS POWER AND THE SOVIETS ARE BETTING THAT DOUKARA WILL PROVIDE THE ACCESS AND SUPPORT THEY MIGHT NEED FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE AFRICAN AREA. THERE IS YET A POSSIBILITY THAT BOTH AMBITIOUS PARTNERS MIGHT OVERPLAY THEIR HAND.
RAWSON

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